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AFSPC commander tours Southwest Asia outposts

by Master Sgt. Austin Carter
AFSPC Public Affairs

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. -- Gen. Lance Lord, commander of Air Force Space Command, spent Thanksgiving with family though he was 7,000 miles from home.

The general traveled to Southwest Asia Nov. 23-29 to visit some of his Air Force family -- Air Expeditionary Force troops in the field. He went to get an overview of how space operations fit into the AEF structure.

"I spent a good portion of my life with our people doing their jobs at an in-place mission -- ICBM and space-based operations -- 24, 7, 365. So I thought it was important for me to visit the people who are part of our Air Expeditionary Force deployed in the Southwest Asia theater to get a look at how space is being integrated into the operational framework," he said in a Dec. 4 interview. "I certainly wanted to see how it was integrated in the Combined Air Operations Center and make sure the space teams had everything they needed to support ongoing operations. Over the last year we've seen how space is a critical element in support of U.S. national objectives. Space capabilities are accepted, trusted and relied on.



Gen. Lance W. Lord, Air Force Space Command commander, visits with airmen from the 320th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron Nov. 26 during his visit with the troops of the 320th Air Expeditionary Wing at a forward deployed location. Lord made a recent trip throughout the Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Southern Watch AOR to visit with the airmen and to get an up-close look at Air Force Space Command assets in the theater. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mitch Gettle)

They want us; they like us; they want more of us."

The general visited forces in Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

He returned, not only with a picture of space integration, but also with a profound regard for the enlisted and officers in the field and the job they are performing every day.

"What I was impressed with was the spirit, the esprit de corps and the morale of the airmen under very severe circumstances -- deployed, separated from their families," he said. "They were really

working well together. We saw combinations of active, Guard and Reserve working side by side with each other. Even though they each wanted to go home when it was time, while at their deployed location, no one was wishing they were somewhere else."

Wherever he found AFSPC troops, he said, he saw them performing their jobs with verve and confidence with other services and international host nationals, as well.

"They were like every other 'hero' in the theater," he said. "They were doing their job, working in their skills for a deployed configuration. The same great job they were doing here,

Happy New Year!

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Onizuka member lauded at awards event

by Valerie Joseph
Public Affairs

Ronald Parker, 21 SOPS Security Forces Operations chief, was named a winner at the 25th Annual San Francisco/Bay Area Federal Employee of the Year Awards ceremony Dec. 5.

Parker was selected in the criminal law enforcement category, which includes border patrol agents, immigration and naturalization agents, and FBI and drug enforcement agents.

In his position he directs security and force protection operations for more than 2,000 people and \$300 million in real property.

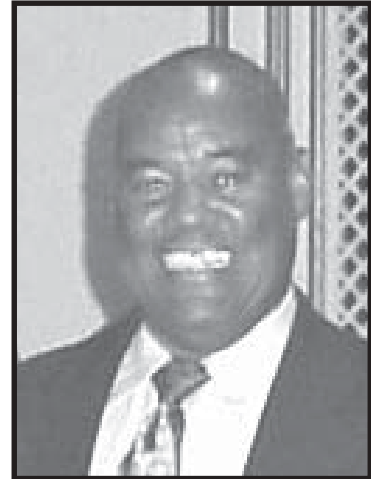
After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Parker orchestrated more than \$2.8 million in terrorism

readiness funding initiatives and force protection upgrades to protect operation of the nation's highest priority satellites. In addition, he was instrumental in securing eight reservists to augment the installation's security forces manning for more than six months. He also wrote and obtained approval for manning retention initiatives, resulting in promotions for a number of security guards.

Aaron Tumlin, 21 SOPS Mission Generation Flight chief, was a nominee in the management category.

Maj. Kirk Broussard, 21 SOPS deputy commander for support, expressed praise for both men.

"It is an honor for me to serve with these two individuals," he said.



Ron Parker

"Congratulations to both Ron and Aaron. I am extremely proud of them."

Air Force changing high year of tenure

by Maj. John J. Thomas
Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN) -- Airmen serving in most enlisted ranks will now have an additional two years available to serve on active duty.

The change, effective Jan. 1 and approved by the secretary of the Air Force recently, is part of an initiative to retain enlisted people's skills and experience, Air Force Personnel Center officials here said.

The revised high-year-of-tenure policy means senior airmen can serve up to 12 years of total service; technical sergeants up to 24 years; master sergeants up to 26 years; and senior master sergeants up to 28 years.

Remaining unchanged are staff sergeants at 20 years and chief master sergeants at 30 years.

"Extending years in service will increase our ability to adequately sustain a highly skilled enlisted force and reduce experienced noncommissioned officer shortages created by both the drawdown in the early '90s and lower retention trends for the past several years," said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray.

Seen as a good option for most airmen, later HYT dates may affect the status of assignments, promotions, re-enlistments and evaluations for thousands of enlisted members, said officials.

"No one will be forced to stay longer, but a lot of people will be able to -- if it fits their plans," said Master Sgt. Mike Hall, superintendent of retirements here. "We encourage everyone near their high year of tenure to visit their local military personnel flight, especially those with planned or pending assignments, separations or retirements."

In the case of senior airmen, HYT dates will automatically be extended to 12 years, regardless of any scheduled

separation date after Dec. 31. Those planning to leave the service soon may be allowed to continue to serve at their current duty location or be reassigned, based on Air Force needs, officials said.

Those airmen who have already spent government funds associated with a separation or retirement will be exempt from the changes, officials said. Typically that includes people who have already shipped household goods, a car, or if their families have already moved using government funds.

"This policy change gives the Air Force the flexibility to keep our experienced people longer. It's the right thing for the Air Force since we are a retention-based force," said Maj. Gen. John Speigel, who is in charge of personnel policy at the Air Staff. "It should help us alleviate stress on some of our career fields and, at the same time, relieve some recruiting and training requirements."

"We have a pretty comprehensive set of instructions, but each case may be a little different. We understand that," Hall said. "It's best for everyone to be sure they understand how these changes will affect them personally."

"For instance, the system will not automatically set a person's retirement date based on the high year of tenure," he said. "And although members' HYT dates will be extended, that will not automatically extend their projected (dates of separation)."

The last revision of HYT dates was in 2001, according to officials. At that time maximum years of service for technical sergeants was increased from 20 to 22 years.

Policies associated with years of service and high year of tenure will continue to be reviewed periodically to ensure they are meeting the needs of the Air Force and Air Force people, officials said.

Officer assignments move beyond 'seven-day option'

by Maj. John J. Thomas
Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN) -- Following secretary of the Air Force guidance, Air Force Personnel Center officials reviewed and improved what was called the "seven-day option" policy for officer assignments.

Those officers who would be eligible to separate or retire instead of taking an assignment will now get more than seven days to act. Also, a general officer will review the assignment before the final decision is made. In the past, these officers were given seven days to elect to take the assignment or apply to leave the Air Force.

After an intense study of the processes many officers use to make those critical decisions, personnel officials made changes that will result in more formal communication earlier in the process between assignment teams, commanders and the affected officer. This will let officers and Air Force officials make the best possible decisions on potential moves.

Before an officer leaves the Air Force as a result of a permanent change-of-station-related decision, a general officer will "ensure that it's the right decision for the individual and for the Air Force," said Maj. Gen.

Thomas O'Riordan, the center commander.

Only about 1 percent of officers typically express the intention to leave the Air Force instead of taking an assignment, officials said.

"What hasn't changed is that our first priority remains filling Air Force needs so we provide a ready and capable Air Force for combatant commanders," said Col. Chris Miller, director of assignments here. "What has changed is that we're taking extra care to consider the impact on future capabilities of letting an experienced officer leave the service who we might possibly be able to retain.

"That sometimes means we need to work with individuals and commanders to explore all reasonable options," he said.

"The needs of the Air Force come first," O'Riordan said. "We will not be able to please every person. But it's worth the effort if we can find some common ground to retain a valuable officer."

For now, senior leaders have agreed that enlisted assignment procedures do not need to change, officials said.

"We've looked hard and found no clear benefit to changing today's enlisted assignment system," said Chief Master Sgt. Carlton McCoy,

superintendent of the airman assignments division here. (*Courtesy of AFPC News Service*)

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myPay offers W-2 forms in January

ARLINGTON, Va. -- Servicemembers, military retirees and annuitants will have their account statements and tax information online courtesy of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's myPay.

In January, active-duty and reserve customers can view and print current-year W-2 using myPay, a secure, online system.

The system allows retirees to view and print their account statements. Annuitants can view and print their account statements and 1099R tax statements, plus they can print 1042S tax statements, copies of their report of existence and submit the form.

To use myPay, active duty, DOD civilians, military retirees and annuitants can use their social security numbers and personal identification numbers to log onto the system at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

Customers with questions can call customer support at (800) 390-2348 Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. EST.

Home safety

The weather is turning colder, and it's time to fire up the furnace for winter. Before you turn on that furnace or portable heater for the first time though, be aware of some important safety steps you need to take.

Any heater that burns gas, coal, kerosene or charcoal can leak carbon monoxide. If a furnace or other appliance that burns one of these fuels is not vented properly, carbon monoxide can build up inside your home causing illness and possibly death.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, invisible gas that kills more than 500 people every year in the United States. Inhaling carbon monoxide can cause headaches, dizziness, weakness, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. High levels of carbon monoxide can cause a person to pass out and possibly die.

Follow these important steps to protect you and your family from the unseen danger of carbon monoxide:

-- Install a working carbon monoxide detector in your

house. Check the battery every time you check your smoke detector batteries.

-- Every year have an expert inspect all appliances that burn fuel, such as the furnace, gas water heater, or portable butane or kerosene heater.

-- Never burn anything in an improperly vented stove or fireplace, and never use a gas oven to heat your house. Such actions can cause carbon monoxide to build up.

-- Do not run a gasoline-powered generator in an enclosed space or outside a window where its exhaust could blow into your home.

-- Never run your car in the garage with the garage door closed. If your garage is attached to your house, close the door to the house any time you run your car in the garage, even when the garage door is open.

-- Clean snow and ice out of the car's tailpipe. A blocked tailpipe can cause exhaust to enter your car.



New TRICARE mail order pharmacy to open March 1

by Rudi Williams
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) -- More than 400,000 military pharmacy mail order customers will be switched March 1 to a new TRICARE mail order pharmacy program, according to Army Col. William D. Davies of the TRICARE Management Activity.

Services will continue under the National Mail Order Pharmacy contract until Feb. 28, he said. The next day, March 1, Express Scripts Inc. will provide the services.

Davies, director of DOD pharmacy programs, said beneficiaries who have refills remaining on prescriptions on March 1 will be transferred to Express Scripts so they can continue ordering medications on time, with a few exceptions.

"We can't transfer narcotics or other controlled substance prescriptions," said Davies. "Nor can we transfer compounded prescriptions, those that are physically prepared by the pharmacy."

Medication that requires refrigeration is shipped through priority

mail or a courier service, such as FedEx, he said.

"That's one reason we don't send medications that require refrigeration to APO and FPO addresses overseas," he noted.

TRICARE beneficiaries living and working overseas can use the mail order pharmacy if they have an APO, FPO or a U.S. embassy address. However, the prescription must be written by a provider licensed to practice in the United States.

In early January, current users should receive a post card announcing the new services. That will be followed by a mailing which will include a registration form, a description of benefits and a brochure covering the TRICARE program.

Those eligible to use the current mail order program or the retail benefit are eligible to use the new TRICARE mail order program. New customers have to register for the program. Information will be provided through the TRICARE service centers and military treatment facilities, as well as their marketing points of contact.

The usual delivery time for medica-

tion is five to seven days. The easiest way for patients to ensure they don't run out of their medication is to have the provider write for up to a 90-day supply with up to three refills. The beneficiary can request a refill once 75 percent of the medication has been used.

"So about day 70 into their medication, they can request a refill," Davies said. "That provides them a cushion."

He said all medication is screened for potential drug interactions or therapeutic overlaps that could produce an adverse drug reaction. He said patients' complete beneficiary profiles are entered into the Pharmacy Data Transition Service, which enhances patient safety by keeping their medication records current, on file and readily available.

The new contract saves taxpayers' dollars because it calls for purchasing drug products at federal prices. Best federal prices are at least 24 percent below average commercial wholesale prices, Davies estimated.

The TRICARE Management Activity will manage the new contract. The current national contract has been managed by the Defense Logistics Agency's Defense Supply Center in Philadelphia.

Patients can fill prescriptions three ways: by direct care at military treatment facilities, the retail pharmacy network or the mail order program, Davies said. The direct care system serves the bulk of the beneficiary population, he said. About 2.5 million beneficiaries use the retail pharmacy network because they don't have access to a military facility.

Most of the 400,000 beneficiaries who use the mail order program do so for chronic medication or maintenance medication needs, Davies said.

"We want beneficiaries who have long-term medication needs to consider using the mail order program. It provides up to a 90-day supply of most medications for a single co-pay,



Holiday giving

Bags of presents reflect the generosity of Onizuka Air Force Station employees who donated more than 330 gifts to the Family Giving Tree Organization of San Jose this holiday season. In addition to toys for underprivileged children, warm clothing and other items of necessity were given to homeless and developmentally disabled people.

Members of the Community Caring Council – Capt. Stewart Aitken-Cade, Sandra Ybarra, Senior Master Sgt. Jess Edwards, Staff Sgt. Kathy Tela, Tech. Sgt. Kristi Brunett, John Konno and Chaplain Gary Piepkorn – ensured the gifts were delivered in time for Christmas. (Photo by Valerie Joseph)

See TRICARE, page 6

Fire protection training

Fire extinguisher/fire prevention training will be held Jan. 29 at 2 p.m. in the Corona Room. Anyone who works odd shifts or is unable to make the scheduled training should notify the fire protection office at 752-6553 or 4180 to make other arrangements. Active-duty military, DOD civilians and contractors are encouraged to attend.



Golf tournament

The Moffett Golf Course is holding a golf tournament Jan. 23 at 1 p.m. Format is four-person scramble and cost is \$15 per person. Sign up at the Pro Shop or call 650-603-8026.

Supervisory training

Basic supervisory training will be offered Feb. 11 to 13 from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Space Place to anyone supervising civilian members. The course will focus on comprehending the supervisor's role within the organization and applying techniques learned in simulated situations. Contact GeriAnn Halog at ext. 6134 for more information.

Booklet offers help for identity theft

WASHINGTON (AFPN) -- A Federal Trade Commission booklet offers guidance for people who have fallen victim to a fast-growing crime: identity theft.

The FTC publication, "ID Theft: When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name," points out that skilled identity thieves have proven adept over the last several years. It explains how they use low- and high-tech methods to gain access to personal data like social security numbers and credit card account information.

Identity thieves use such information to open up new credit accounts, running up thousands of dollars of illicit bills, including bank and automobile loans, which are charged to victims.

The publication is available online at www.consumer.gov/idtheft. (Courtesy of American Forces Press Service)

DOD civilian seminars

Civilian personnel is offering DOD civilian mid-career planning and pre-retirement seminars Jan. 14 to 16 from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Space Place. Contact GeriAnn Halog at ext. 6134 for more information.

Golf course passes

Onizuka Air Force Station Services will issue golf course passes every Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Space Place. The pass will allow access to the Moffett Golf Course and is good for one year. A company-issued photo ID card is required. For more information, contact Larry Hudgins at ext. 3636.

Free golf clinic

The Moffett Golf Course is offering a free clinic on rules of the game Jan. 21 from 4 to 5 p.m. at the practice green area. This is a great class for beginners and no equipment is needed. Call 650-603-8026 for more information.



Civ Personnel office hours

Due to heavy workload and upcoming office move, the Civilian Personnel Office has instituted operating hours as follows: Monday through Friday, 7:30 to 11:30 a.m.: walk-ins welcome; 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.: by appointment only.

For recruitment and staffing issues, contact Stephanie Padilla at ext. 4755; for employee relations, contact GeriAnn Halog at ext. 6134; and for labor relations, contact Sue Jacks at ext. 3619.

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they're doing there. Whether they're enlisted or officer, they're all doing the things we expect of them. We not only have in-place missions where we perform critical jobs...we also have people from those missions who are critical and vital for deployment as well. We have a lot of heroes in a lot of places."

Morale was extraordinarily strong among the troops, added Chief Master Sgt. Ronald Kriete, AFSPC command chief, who accompanied the general on the tour.

"They were very mission-focused," Kriete said. "They're also starting to understand the AEF construct better."

Whether they're space weapons officers, first sergeants, security forces or any other job in AFSPC, being involved in AEF is as much a part of the job as the day-to-day mission, the general said.

"Deployments are part of our business; it's part of the Air Force construct," Lord said. "[AEF] is part of who we are as a command and in the Air Force. An expeditionary mindset is something we have to adopt. This is the kind of tempo we're going to live with in the future. We have to keep our edge to make sure we're ready to do whatever we're called to do."

But, he concluded, after touring the outposts of Southwest Asia where AFSPC members are living and working, there were no doubts in his mind about the ability of those in the command to thrive in that tempo.

"This expeditionary business is really growing on us, not only on the Air Force, but certainly on Air Force Space Command," he said. "While continuing our great day-to-day space and missile mission, we're doing AEF better and better and our people are on the front lines."

Rumsfeld: No need for draft; 'disadvantages notable'

by Kathleen T. Rhem
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- The United States is not going to implement a military draft, because there is no need for it, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Jan. 7.

Rep. Charles Rangel said recently he was planning to introduce such legislation in the new year. Rep. John Conyers Jr. has since expressed support.

"I believe that if those calling for war knew their children were more likely to be required to serve -- and to be placed in harm's way -- there would be more caution and a greater willingness to work with the international community in dealing with Iraq," Rangel wrote in a recent commentary in the New York Times.

Rumsfeld dismissed the notion out of hand during a Pentagon press briefing. "I don't know of anyone in this building or in the administration who thinks anyone ought to go to war lightly," he said. "I know the president doesn't, and I know I don't."

The country doesn't need a draft because the all-volunteer force works. In fact, the United States has the most effective military in the world precisely because it is all volunteer, Joint Chiefs Chairman Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers said.

"(The all-volunteer force is) efficient; it's effective; it's given the United States of America, the citizens of this great country, a military that is second to none," Myers said.

"The people that are in the armed services today ... are there because they want to be there and are ready and willing and, without any question, capable of doing whatever the president may ask," Rumsfeld added.

The secretary described "notable disadvantages" to having a conscripted force. He said people are involuntarily forced to serve, some for less than they could earn on the outside. There are many exemptions, which change all the time, thus providing for unfair situations. Troops are "churned" through training, serve the minimum amount of time and leave, thus causing more money to be spent to churn more draftees through the system.

He also dismissed the notion that the all-volunteer force leads to a disproportionate number of blacks and other minorities being killed in battle.

"I do not know that that's historically correct," Rumsfeld said. "And I do not know that, even if it were historically correct, that it's correct today."

He and Myers kept coming back to their bottom line: America is better off for the force it has today.

"We have people serving today -- God bless 'em -- because they volunteered," Rumsfeld said. "They want to be doing what it is they're doing. And we're just lucky as a country that there are so many wonderfully talented young men and young women who each year step up and say, 'I'm ready; let me do that.'"



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If you want your ad to run longer, please resubmit or contact Public Affairs at (408) 752-4035.

Worth Repeating

"...Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth."



--Abraham Lincoln,
Gettysburg Address, 1863

TRICARE, from page 4

whereas they only receive a 30-day supply for a single co-pay in the retail network pharmacy system," he said.

Under the TRICARE mail order pharmacy system, the co-pay for up to a 90-day supply for most medications is \$9 for branded products or \$3 for generics. Exceptions include controlled substances, and active duty members are not required to pay.

For more information, including a complete section on the co-pay structure, visit the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil. Reservists can check the site for details of their benefits under the program.

(Courtesy of American Forces Press Service)

Onizuka Orbiter

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